

from every available source and evaluates on a continuing basis any information suggesting the existence of a safety-related defect.

§ 554.6 Opening an investigation.

(a) A compliance or defect investigation is opened either on the motion of the Administrator or his delegate or on the granting of a petition of an interested party under part 552 of this chapter.

(b) A manufacturer is notified immediately by telephone of any compliance test failure in order to enable the manufacturer to begin his own investigation. Notification is sent by mail at the beginning of any defect or noncompliance investigation.

§ 554.7 Investigation priorities.

(a) Compliance investigation priorities are reviewed annually and are set according to the following criteria:

- (1) Prior compliance test data;
- (2) Accident data;
- (3) Engineering analysis of vehicle and equipment designs;
- (4) Consumer complaints; and
- (5) Market share.

(b) Defects inputs are reviewed periodically by an appropriate panel of engineers in consultation with the Office of Chief Counsel to determine whether a formal investigation should be opened by the Office of Defects Investigation.

§ 554.8 Monthly reports.

(a) *Compliance.* A monthly compliance report is issued which lists investigations opened, closed, and pending during that month, identifies compliance test reports accepted, and indicates how individual reports may be obtained.

(b) *Defects.* A monthly defects report is issued which lists investigations opened, closed, pending, and suspended during that month. An investigation may be designated "suspended" where the information available is insufficient to warrant further investigation. Suspended cases are automatically closed 60 days after appearing in a monthly report unless new information is received which justifies a different disposition.

§ 554.9 Availability of files.

All files of closed or suspended investigations are available for public inspection in the NHTSA Technical Reference Library. Communications between the agency and a manufacturer with respect to ongoing investigations are also available. Such files and communications may contain material which is considered confidential but has been determined to be necessary to the subject proceeding. Material which is considered confidential but has not been determined to be necessary to the subject proceeding will not be disclosed. Reproduction of entire public files or of individual documents can be arranged.

§ 554.10 Initial determinations and public meetings.

(a) An initial decision of failure to comply with safety standards or of a safety-related defect is made by the Administrator or his delegate based on the completed investigative file compiled by the appropriate office.

(b) The decision is communicated to the manufacturer in a letter which makes available all information on which the decision is based. The letter advises the manufacturer of his right to present information, views, and arguments to establish that there is no defect or failure to comply or that the alleged defect does not affect motor vehicle safety. The letter also specifies the time and place of a public meeting for the presentation of arguments or sets a date by which written comments must be submitted. Submission of all information, whether at a public meeting or in written form, is normally scheduled about 30 days after the initial decision. The deadline for submission of information can be extended for good cause shown.

(c) Public notice of an initial decision is made in a FEDERAL REGISTER notice that—

- (1) Identifies the motor vehicle or item of equipment and its manufacturer;
- (2) Summarizes the information on which the decision is based.
- (3) Gives the location of all information available for public examination; and